11/13/60

*TEACHER, SHOW US A SIGN

WOULDN'T IT BE A LOT EASIER TO BE A CHIRSTIAN IF WE HAD SOME PROOF OF ALL THE THINHS WE SAY WE BELIEVE. IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA THE EVENTS THAT SURROUNEDED JESUS' LIFE ON EARTH SEEM A LONG WAY OFF, THE TRUTH THAT ~~MERE~~ men enthusiastically ~~ENTHISEACTICALL~~ GRASPED TWENTY CENTURIES AGO HAS LOST SOME OF ITS LUSTER TODAY.

TO THESE TYPICAL RAMBLINGS OF A MODERN CHRISTIAN THE GOSPEL message has a like situatuon and answer. in the scripture read- ING THIS MORNING TWO VERY IMPORTANT POINTS ARE DISCUSSED WHICH I WANT TO EXAMINE CLOSELY.

THE FIRST IS THE AGO OLD NEED OF MANKIND FOR POSITIVE, AB- solute proof of that WHICH HE BELIEVES -------- THE SECOND IS seeing to believe the proof of the pudding

THE RESULT OF HAVING NO PROOF FOR THINGS THAT ARE TRUE IN THEMSELVES; THE INEVITABLE TENDENCY OF MAN TO SUBSTITUTE INFERIOR BUT PROVABLE BELIEFS FOR TRUTH THAT IS ABOVE PROVING.

IN THE TWELTH CHAPTER OF MATTHEW , JESUS IS BEING INTEROGATED, ,CHALLENGED AND TAUNTED BY THE PHARISEES. THEY ASK HIM BY WHAT RIGHT DOES HE BREAK THE SABBATH BY HEALING, BY WHOSE POWER DOES HE PERFORM THESE ACTS OF HEALING. HE HAS JUST HEALED A MAN IN FRONT OF THEIR EYES BUT THEY FIND COMFORT IN DECIDING THAT HE

HAS HEALED THRO GH THE POWER OF BEEZELBUB, THE PRINCE OF THE EVIL SPIRITS ------ SATAN HIMSELF.

THE MAN THAT THEY ARE QUESTONING HAS CLAIMED TO BE THE MESSIAH, THE CHOSEN ONE OF THE LORD,------ THE ONE THEY HAVE READ ABOUT IN THEIR study of prophecy, THE ONE THEY HAVE SO fervently PRAYED AND HOPED FOR.

SOME OF THEM NO DOUBT ARE INSULTED THAT THIS HUMBLE MAN HAS MADE SUCH A CLAIM, OTHERS, WE CAN ASSUME, WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE HIM AND ACCEPT HIM BUT FIND THAT THEY CANNOT.

FOR BOTH OF THESE REASONS THEY ASK HIM "TEACHER, SHOW US A SIGN". WE WILL BE GLAD TO ACCEPT YOU AND PRAISE YOU AS THE SAVIER IF YOU WILL ONLY PROVE IT TO US. JESUS COMPLIED BY CALLING THEM A BROOD OF VIPERS, AN EVIL GENERATION THAT IS TO BLIND TO SEE THE TRUTH THAT IS BEFORE THEIR EYES -- HE HAS SHOWN THEM THE POWER OF GOD BY HEALING, He healed men BUT , OUT OF COMPASSION, NOT BECAUSE HE DESIRED TO PROVE ANYTHING AND EXALT HIMSELF. HAVING WITNESSED A DISPLAY OF DIVINE LOVE THAT HAS MADE A DUMB MAN SPEAK THEY STILL DO NOT BELIEVE THAT HE IS THE MESSIAH.

HOW MUCH SIMPLER IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IF JESUS WOULD HAVE ONLY EXHIBITED THE POWER OF GOD BY PERFORMING SOME MIRACLE, HOW MUCH EASIER FOR THESE MEN AND US, IF ONLY JESUS WOULD HAVE GATHERED AN AUDIENCE AND PROCEEDED TO PROVE HIS DIVINITY BY MOVING A MOUNTAIN OR PLUCKING A STAR FROM THE SKY.

THE POINT IS ---- THAT IN HIS HARSH REPLY HE ABSOLUTELY REFUSED, HE RULED OUT FOREVER THE CHANCE THAT HE MIGHT PUT ON A DISPLAY OF SHEER POWER SO THAT MEN MIGHT BE IMPRESSED AND BELIEVE IN HIM

HE POINTS OUT TO THE GROUP AROUND HIM TWO HISTORICAL INCIDENTS WHERE MEN ACCEPTED THE TRUTH BEFORE THEIR EYES AT FACE VALUE. JONAH WENT TO NINEVAH PREACHING REPENTENCE --- AND THE PEOPLE REPENTED. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA HAD HEARD OF SOLOMONS WISDOM AND INSTEAD OF ASKING FOR PROOF OR A DISPLAY OF OF POWER SHE WENT HERSELF TO SEE AND HEAR THE GREAT MAN.

THESE ARE PEOPLE OF THE PAST THAT RECOGNIZED THE TRUTH, WITHOUT HAVING IT DEMONSTRATED TO THEM. IF ONLY THIS GENERATION COULD BE SO WIDE-EYED AND OPEN HEARTED. IF ONLY WE COULD ACCEPT TRUTH WITHOUT PROOF.

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF MANKIND SIGNS HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE, MEN HAVE INTERPRETED VARIATIONS IN NATURE AS A SIGN. VARYING OCCURENCES IN EVERYDAY LIFE HAVE BEEN CALLED GOOD OMENS, BAD

oMENS

OMENS, --- A SIGN FOR MANY PEOPKE. THE POSITION OF THE STARS HAS DETERMINED THE ATTACK PLANS FOR MANY AN ARMY. THE CYCLES OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES HAVE BEEN THOUGHT TO GREATLY INFLUENCE THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF CROPS. MEN HAVE BELIEVED THAT AN ABUNDANCE OF RAIN IS A SIGN OF GODS APPROVAL, ---AND A DROUGHT A SIGN OF HIS ANGER.

IN OUR EVERY DAY LIFE WE ARE COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON SIGNS IN THE MATERIAL, PHYSICAL SENSE. EVERYONE KNOWS THE FEELING OF ANXIETY OF DRIVING THROUGH AN UNFAMILIAR AREA AND SEARCHING THE ROAD SIDE FOR A ROUTE SIGN. WE HAVE SIGNS TO TELL US WHERE WE ARE, HOW FAR TO GO, WHAT TO EAT, HOW TO VOTE, HOW TO DRESS AN SO ON, A FAIRLY ACCURATE IMPRESSION OF OUR CULTURE COULD BE HAD BY LOOKING AT A COLLECTION OF OUR SIGNS.

THE POINT I WANT TO MAKE THIS MORNING, HOWEVER , IS NOT THAT WE ARE PLAGUED WITH AN ABUHDANCE OF BILLBOARDS, BUT SOMRTHING MORE SIGNIFICANT, SOMETHING FOR WHICH THESE SIGNS ARE EMBLEMATIC. AND THAT IS OUR COMPLETE AND UTTER DEPENDENCE ON MATERIAL PROOF FOR ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIFE. IT IS AN AMAZING REVELATION TO THINK ABOUT OUR CIVILIZATION FOR A MINUTE AND TO TRY TO FIND SOME AREA IN LIFE WE ACCEPT AND PARTICIPATE IN, WITHOUT MATERIAL EVIDENCE THAT THIS PARTICULAR ENDEAVOR IS GOOD OR USEFUL.

WE EAT SCIENTIFCALLY CHOSEN AND TREATED FOOD BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN PROVED ~~THAT THEY ARE~~ BEST, WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY BELIEVE IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BECAUSE WE HAVE PROOF, MATHEMTICAL PROOF, ON PAPER AND IN EQUATIONS THAT THESE DICIPLINES ARE ACCURATE**THEY ARE TRUTH. INDEED WE LIVE QUITE SCIENTIFICALLY BY THE RULE BOOK.

BUT THERE IS ONE AREA THAT WE LIKE TO INCLUDE IN OUR PATTERN OF LIFE FOR WHICH WE HAVE NO PROOF. BECAUSE OF OUR COMPLETE DEPENDENCE ON SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN BITS OF ADVICE, RELIGION SEEMS TO BE OUT OF PLACE IN OUR WAY OF LIFE. BECAUSE WE LIVE IN A CULTURE THAT CAN BACK UP ITS CLAIMS WITH FACTS AND FIGURES IT BECOMES EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ENTER WITHOUT HESITATION AN ENDEAVOR THAT CLAIMS NO PROOF, THAT HAS NO CHARTS AND FIGURES WITH WHICH ITS RADICAL CLAIMS CAN BE VALIDATED.

As I said before how much simpler christianity would be if the Christ would ONLY MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN TO ~~ME~~ US PERSONALLY. HOW MUCH EASIER IF ~~I~~ WE COULD HAVE A REAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, IF ~~I~~ WE COULD SEE A MIRACLE. AND YET, LIKE THE PHARISEES WE CAN SEE EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE ALL AROUND US. WE CAN SEE THE HANDIWORK OF A WISDOM THAT IS INFINITLY MORE SCIENTIFIC THAN THAT OF THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED PHYSICIST. IF YOU CARE TO, THE WORLD OF NATURE CAN BE OBSERVED AS THE MOST INTRICATE AND PERFECTLY BALANCED OF ALL EQUATIONS. THE BEAUTY OF ART, MUSIC, LITERATURE ALL POINT TO SOMETHING GREATER THAN MAN HIMSELF, THEY POINT TO THE POWER OF THE

DIVINE THAT COURSES THROUGH ALL OF NATURE AND ALL OF HUMAN LIFE AND THAT MOMENTARILLY BURSTS FORTH IN A PAINTING OR A GREAT SYMPHONY OR A MOVING PIECE OF POETRY.

EACH NEW SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, EACH ADVANCE IN MEDICAL SCIENCE, EVERY NEW STEP MAN MAKES IN HIS CONQUEST OF NATURE IS LOADED WITH THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S POWER ~~AND~~ BUT WE, LIKE THE PHARISEES ARE TOO BLIND TO SEE. SCIENTISTS ~~ARE PRAISED~~ we give credit to FOR THEIR DISCOVERIES BUT THE CREATOR OF THE MYSTERY THEY ARE SOLVING IS NOT MENTIONED. THE FEELING OF PRIDE THAT ACCOMPANIES THE BIRTH OF A CHILD IS TOO OFTEN EXPRESSED IN THE THOUGHT "BY GOLLY IF I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING IN MY LIFE I'ME ACCOMPLISHED SOMET ING HERE". LITTLE THOUGHT IS GIVEN TO THE DIVINE WILL OF GOD THAT IS REVEALED EVERYTIME A NEW BEING IS CREATED. WE, LIKE THE PHARISEES CONTINUALLY TURN OUR BACKS ON THE DIVINE IN OUR PRESENCE. HAVING NO MATERIAL EVIDENCE, NO BILLBOARDS TO ADVERTISE GOD'S OMNI-PRESENCE IN NATURE AND ALL OF HUMAN LIFE WE, LIKE THE PHARISEES CANNOT WHOLLY BELIEVE/WE HAVE NO PROOF!

ALREADY, I HAVE DEALT WITH THE SECOND MAJOR POINT OF MY TEST FOR THI S MORNING--THE RESULT OF OUR NEGLIGENCE TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH THAT IS BEFORE OUR EYES. THE WAY IN WHICH WE HAVE SUBSTITUTED PROVABLE, MATERIAL EVIDENCE AS OUR VALUES.

AFTER HAVING REFUSED TO PERFORM A MIRACLE TO CONVINCE THE PHARISEES, RULING OUT ANY INTENDED PROVING GROUND FOR HIS DIVINITY JESUS MAKES USE OF A STRANGE AND WONDERFUL STORY TO DESCRIBE WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THESE MEN THAT SO DESIRE AND WHO WERE REFUSED. TO MEN WHO SUBSTITUTED verifiable laws for spiritual truth PROOF--~~AND WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO US~~. HE USES A PARABLE THAT IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST UNFAMILIAR OF ALL HIS PARABLES AND ANLOGIES/ THE STORY OF THE SEVEN DEVILS. A MAN HAS BEEN CLEANSED OF AN EVIL SPIRIT, HE HAS RID HIMSELF OF HIS WORST ~~MXXXXXXXX~~ HABITS, HIS WRONG BELIEFS. THE HOUSE, OR THE BODY, IS THEREFORE CLEAN, SWEPT/ BUT EMPTY. THE VANQUISHED SPIRIT ROAMS FOR AWHILE AND RETURNS TO FIND THE EMPTY HOUSE. IN HIS GLEE HE BRINGS ALONG SEVEN OTHER EVIL SPIRITS AND THEY QUICKLY INVADE THE HOUSE CAUSING IT TO BE MUCH WORSE THAN IT WAS ORIGINALLY. AT FIRST THIS SIMPLE LITTLE TABE SEEMS TO BE MERE ANCIENT MYTHOLOGY BUT ON A SECOND GLANCE IT IS CLEAR THAT JESUS WAS STRIKING AT THE COR OF HIS DIFFERENCES WITH The PHARISEES AND WITH CONTEMPORARY AMERICANISM. THE PHARISEES HAVE CLEANED ~~XXXXXXXXXXX~~ THEIR HOUSE WELL, BY STRICT FOLLOWING OF THE LAW THEY HAVE RID THEMSELVES OF ALL EVIL, THEY ~~ARE~~ WERE FAIR, LAW ABIDING CITIZENS, THEY DO NO WRONG, THEY ~~HEVE~~ LIVED BY THE RULE BOOK. BUT IN SO DOING THEY ~~HAVE COME~~ CAME TO DEPEND ON THEIR OWN EFFORTS OF FULFILLING THE LAW TO PRODUCE RIGHTEOUSNESS. IN THEIR ~~PRESENT~~ STATE OF SELF CENTERED GOODNESS THEY ~~ARE~~ WERE INDEED SEVEN TIMES WORSE THAN THEY WERE BEFORE--FOR NOW THEY ~~ARE~~ WERE

BLINDED WAS
~~BLINDED~~ TO THE TRUTH THAT ~~IS~~ AMONG THEM. BECAUSE JESUS COULD SHOW NO MATERIAL EVIDENCE, BECAUSE HE DIDN'T OPERATE ACCORDING TO THE SET OF RULES THEY LOVED SO WELL THEY COULD NOT BELIEVE HIM. THEY HAD SUBSTITUTED FACTS AND FIGURES, A SET OF RULES FOR THE MESSAGE OF GOD THAT WAS PLACED BEFORE THEM.

MEN'S MINDS CANNOT OPERATE IN A VACUUM -

~~THE PHARISEES WERE NOT THE ONLY WHO TRIED TO SUBSTITUTE MATERIALLY PROVEN~~

WHEN ONE SET OF IDEAS IS OUTDATED ANOTHER

~~FAITH FOR THAT WHICH IS A MYSTERY.~~

SET MUST OCCUPY THE EMPTY SPACE

A CLASSIC SECULAR EXAMPLE OF THIS SUBSTITUTION IS SEEN IN THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN 1920 and 1940 IN GERMANY. GERMANY WAS RID OF KAISERISM, THE MYTH OF ARRYAN CULTURE DOMINATING THE GLOBE WAS CUUSHED, GERMAN MILITARISM HAD PROVEN INFERIOR--INDEED THE HOUSE WAS CLEN, GERMANY HAD BEEN RID OF ITS EVIL SPIRIT. BUT THE HOUSE WAS NOT EMPTY LONG--INTO THE GAP RUSHED HITLER WITH THE SEVEN DEVILS OF ANTI SEMITISM, SCIENTIFIC CONTEMPT FOR LIFE, ARRYAN SUPERIORITY AND SO ON. NO ONE WOULD DISAGREE THAT GERMANY WAS SEVEN TIMES WORSE THAN BEFORE.

THERE CAN BE NO GAP WITHOUT A SET OF BELIEFS / THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS "NO FAITH." / WHEN MEN MAKE AN ATTEMPT TO CLEANSE THEMSELVES OF OLD FAULTS AND BELIEFS--NEW ONES MUST RUSH IN. YOU KNOW THE PHYSICAL PRINCIPLE THAT ~~MAN~~ under ORDINARY CONDITIONS A VACUUM CANNOT EXIST BECAUSE AIR WILL IMMEDIATELY RUSH IN TO FILL THE EMPITED SPACE. THE SAME IS TRUE SPIRITUALLY.

AN EXAMPLE OF SPIRITUAL SUBSTITUTION

A BETTER EXAMPLE CAN BE SEEN IN THE HISTORY OF SOVIET RUSSIA FROM THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION. FOR CENTURIES RUSSIA WAS THE CENTER OF EASTERN CHRISTIANTY, A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. BUT AT THE REVOLUTION AND THE BIRTH OF MARXIST COMMUNISM THE OLD ORDER WAS DISPELLED. THE PEOPLE WERE CLEANSED AND THE HOUSE WAS EMPTY, THERE WAS A SPIRITUAL VACUUM. IN RUSHED THE COMMUNIST PARTY, ITS CANONICAL SCRIPTURES, ITS HERO WORSHIP, ITS PROPHETS, CONFESSION AND CHOSEN PEOPLE. THERE CAN BE NO VACUUM. RATIONALLY PROVEN PRINCIPLES WERE SUBSTITUTED FOR MYSTICAL BELIEFS, HISTORICAL CHARACTERS TOOK THE PLACE OF MYTHOLOGICAL DISCIPLES. PROVEN TRUTH TOOK THE PLACE OF SPIRITUAL (UNPROVABLE) REALITY.

RELIGION - OPIATE
NO PLACE IN SOC. CULTURE
SOMETHING HAD TO TAKE THE PLACE OF CHRISTIANITY

AT THIS POINT YOU MAY BE WONDERING WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH US? JESUS WAS RIGHT IN POINTING OUT TO THE PHARISEES THAT THEY HAD SUBSTITUTED THE LAW FOR THE REAL TRUTH AND WERE UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND RECOGNIZE HIM. WE ARE RIGHT IN POINTING OUT HOW COMMUNISM IS OCCUPYING THE PLACE THAT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH USED TO HAVE IN RUSSIA, THAT MATERIALISM HAS REPLACED SPIRITUAL FAITH. BUT NOT US. WE BELIEVE IN GOD. WE GO TO CHURCH, WE GIVE GENEROUSLY TO ALL CHARITIES AND LEAD A PRETTY DESCENT LIFE. WE HAVE CLEANED OUR HOUSES AND EVERY-THING IS IN ORDER. BUT TO US WHO THINK THUS, COMES THE LITTLE STORY OF THE SEVEN DEVILS THAT JESUS TOLD MEN WHO WANTED SOME PROOF. WE TOO ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE

INVASION OF THE SEVEN DEVILS. WE TOO HAVING CLEANSED OUR LIVES OF SUPERSTITION, OF FALSE SCIENCE HAVE PLACED

TECHNICAL SUPERIORITY, SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY AHEAD AS THE DETERMININF FACTORS

IN OUR LIVING. BUT WE HAVE MADE THE GRAVE ERROR OF PUTTING ALL OUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET,

THE BASKET OF PROVEN DATA, SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN FACTS, IN THE BASKET OF THE

SECURITY THAT ACCOMPANIES DOING EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO THE HARD FACTS OF LIFE.

WE HAVE Eliminated an area of equal truth - that cannot be proven - spiritual truth

ONE NEEDS ONLY TO LOOK AT THE WAY IN WHICH OUR COUNTRY HAS DECIDED TO

COMBAT COMMUNISM. NOT ON THE IDEOLOGIC SCALE, THE LEVEL OF IDEAS --BUT ON THE

SCALE OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH. WE ARE PAYING LITTLE ATTENTION TO THE STRUGGLE FOR

MEN 'S MINDS, WE ARE LITTLE CONCERNED WITH WHAT IS RIGHT, WHAT IS TRUE--BUT

SPEND ALL OUR TIME AND MONEY DISPLAYING FORCE, TANGIBLE SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN

POWER. RATHER THAN KNOWING THAT WE ARE RIGHT--WE KNOW WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO

ANNHIALLATE THE ENEMY--THIS IS FACT, THIS OUR SUBSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUAL TRUTH.

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR PIECES OF PROSE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS JOYCE

KILMER'S

~~KILLMORES~~--A TREE. SCIENTIFICALLY ~~HER~~ HIS DESCRIPTION OF A TREE DOESN'T HOLD MUCH

WATER AND YET WHO WILL DENY THAT ~~HER~~ HIS DESCRIPTION IS TRUE. ~~SHE~~ He IS NOT DENYING

THAT A BIOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION OF A TREE IS TRUE--BUT ~~SHE~~ He IS AFFIRMING THAT THERE

IS SOMETHING GREATER" HERE. ~~HER~~ HIS POEM IS A POPULAR WITNESS TO A TRUTH THAT CAN'T

BE PROVEN, A TRUTH THAT CAN'T BE CHARTED OR EXPRESSED IN A FORMULA.

WHEN WE LONG FOR A SIGN, WHEN WE WISH THAT JESUS CHRIST WOULD PERFORM SOME MIRACLE THAT WE MIGHT BE CONVINCED LET US REMEMBER THAT THE TRUTH THAT HE DEMONSTRATES IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY OF OUR FACTS. WHEN WE WANT PROOF LET US STOP TO RECOGNIZE THAT THIS DESIRE IS THE TYPICAL REACTION OF OUR CULTURE BUT THAT HE NEEDS NO SPECIAL PROOF.

WE HAVE RECEIVED OUR SIGN ONCE AND FOR ALL IN THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THAT WE HAVE OUR INVITATION FROM GOD TO CLEAN OUR HOUSE AND TO FILL IT WITH THE LOVE COMPASSION AND GLORY THAT WAS CALVARY. LET US OPEN OUR EYES TO THIS TRUTH LET US NOT BE LIKE THE PHARISEES WHO WERE BLIND TO CHRIST IN THEIR MIDST. LET US NOT SUBSTITUTE MATERIAL PROVABLE STANDARDS FOR THAT WHICH NEEDS NO PROOF. THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST CANNOT BE MEASURED SCIENTIFICALLY FOR IT IS ABOVE ALL SCIENCE. IT CANNOT BE PROVEN LOGICALLY FOR IT IS ABOVE ALL HUMAN LOGIC. THIS GOSEPL, THE LOVE ARE TRUTH--LET US NOT BE BLINDED TO THEM.